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ABSTRACT

This report discusses national trends in achieving excellence in public education. Although graduation rates have improved greatly since the late 1940s and early 1950s, school restructuring is necessary if the basic skills of the nation's youth are to be improved sufficiently to meet the economic challenges of the 1990s. State governors are particularly concerned with education for the following reasons: (1) education is one of the largest items in state budgets; (2) a skilled labor force is required to attract modern industry to a state; (3) there is a direct relationship between the percentage of dropouts and the percentage of incarcerated persons in a state; and (4) the United States has always had a leadership role in education. The "Governors' 1991 Report on Education" suggested the following key recommendations to improve the quality of education: (1) make strategic investments in education; (2) treat teachers and principals as professionals; and (3) provide more choices among public schools. Empowerment of teachers and low-income parents in New York (New York) and Cambridge (Massachusetts) has resulted in the development of innovative curricula, reduced teacher attrition, and increased achievement test scores for minority group students. School choice plans in Minnesota, Florida, Arizona, and Michigan have increased academic achievement and improved college preparation. Responses to questions from participants are included. (FMW)

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Choice And Excellence in Public Education

Perspectives on National Trends

by
Joe Nathan

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...a private, non-profit organization supported by business, industry, labor and local government. The organization's main purpose is providing a much-needed link between the private and public sectors at the regional level by engaging in research and action programs which provide a basis for significant progress in regional problem solving within metropolitan Detroit's seven-county region.

MAC's program priorities include "Joint Public Ventures," in which more than 35 communities within four consortia are implementing more effective and efficient delivery of governmental services, as well as "Urgent Issues for the '80's," which identifies available options for private and public impact on the areas of K-12 education, the regional infrastructure and the siting of hazardous waste facilities.

Metropolitan Affairs Corporation is funded by contributions from business, industry and labor (no public tax dollars are used for the organization's support). Its Board of Directors includes representatives of business, industry, labor, higher education and local government. An Advisory Council to the Board of Directors extends MAC's involvement throughout the regional private and public communities.

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Enthusiasm Grows for MAC Proposals

A number of recent developments around the nation have demonstrated a growing enthusiasm for several of the key ideas contained in MAC's **Dialogue for Change** report.

In this transcript of remarks by Joe Nathan, two of those developments are highlighted:

a) the concept of **choice** in K-12 education has become a real thrust for excellence in a number of states—examples are cited from New York, Minnesota and Massachusetts;

b) **empowerment** of teachers (what we called "treating teachers as professionals") goes hand-in-hand with the choice option, and Nathan's remarks amply demonstrate the need for both, including how they thrive together in ways neither would if done alone.

We believed that these options, and our others as well, would be significant steps in re-structuring of K-12 education to meet future needs of our children. The examples cited by Joe Nathan demonstrate not only the soundness of the ideas but how they drive quality and excellence in those situations where they have been implemented.

I urge you to read these remarks carefully—they tell an important story of success in re-structuring K-12 education.

Chuck Muer

Chuck Muer
Chairman, Education Committee

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Preface

Restructuring of K-12 education is an idea whose time is happening across the country. Stimulating discussion and eventual educational change was the basic purpose of the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation's report, *Dialogue for Change: Options for Re-Structuring K-12 Education*.

As part of the effort to facilitate further movement toward educational change, the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation (MAC) and SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, co-sponsored a luncheon presentation by Joe Nathan about national trends on educational excellence in public education. Following the luncheon, SEMCOG sponsored a workshop on choice and excellence in education with Nathan as the presenter.

This document includes remarks by Nathan at both the luncheon and the workshop on March 26, 1987 at the Michigan Inn, Southfield, Michigan.

His message is of particular value and interest to people who are concerned about working toward educational change and excellence in the public schools.

Biographical Sketch of Presenter

Joe Nathan is a national expert in educational excellence. He understands the educational change process at two important levels — the local public school district and the national perspective.

He has been a teacher and administrator with the Wichita, Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, and has participated in some highly innovative programs in the St. Paul schools.

He shared many of those experiences in his first book, *Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools*. His second book, *Micro-Myths: Exploring the Limits of Learning with Computers*, has been selected by the National School Boards Association as one of 10 books published last year which are "must reading" for local school board members.

More recently, Nathan served as consultant coordinator of the National Governors' Association project, *Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education*.

That national perspective has been enhanced in the past six months through 139 presentations in 32 states — combining his experience with the National Governors' report with those important opportunities for dialogue and discussion in 139 forums across the nation.

Joe Nathan was one of the important resource persons for MAC's report, *Dialogue for Change: Options for Re-Structuring K-12 Education*.

Selected Remarks Excerpted from Joe Nathan Presentations

"The Governors' Association looked closely at what happens when families have the opportunity to select among schools and said four things. First, in families that have the opportunity to select among public schools, parents feel better about the schools. Second, students do better in school, their attitude improves, their achievement improves, and their graduation rate improves. Third, when teachers are given the opportunity to create different kinds of programs from which families can choose, teachers feel better about their work. Finally, high quality programs of choice among public schools result in more integration. There is more mixing of kids from different racial and economic backgrounds."

"Empowerment of parents to choose among schools doesn't make any sense if you haven't given teachers the opportunity to create distinctive schools. Empowerment of teachers doesn't make any sense if you haven't given parents the opportunity to select among schools. Teachers will create distinctive kinds of schools."

"Our report (Governors' Report) is not a teacher bashing, it's not a school bashing report in the sense that we say that teachers are awful, school board members are awful, principals are awful, woe is us! We don't say that. We say that there are a lot of dedicated, caring people in the schools and there are lots of school board members who care. But the way that we organize the system is not designed for the highest productivity. We must reorganize the system if we are to achieve the potential of students and educators."

"The Governors' Association strongly endorsed more choice among the public schools."

"One of the things we must do is to empower teachers. Treat them as professionals or stop criticizing schools. We will not have significantly better schools or higher achievement if we continue to treat teachers as factory workers."

"There is a coming realization that if we are to have much more effective schools we must have a restructured school system."

SECTION A
Perspectives on Educational Change
MAC/SEMCOG Luncheon

In 1983 the President's Commission on Excellence and Education suggested that we were at risk and there was a rising tide of mediocrity in our schools. I happen to vigorously disagree. I think the nation's schools have a severe problem and I think our educational levels could be significantly improved, but I disagree that there is a rising tide of mediocrity.

Nevertheless, since 1983 there have been more than 375 national reports about how to improve American education and countless statewide and local reports. So whether one agrees or disagrees about a rising tide of mediocrity in the schools, there's simply no doubt we have had a rising tide of reports about the nation's schools. Those of us who care about our schools as well as those of us who work day-to-day in the schools, often shrug our shoulders and say, "Oh goodness, another report."

Governors' Report

Frankly, that was my attitude when some Governors asked me if I was interested in helping produce what ultimately became the Governors' 1991 Report on Education.[1] I asked why the nation needed another report. We certainly had a lot. We have many dedicated, compassionate, caring, effective people in the schools

"Frankly some of the reforms that were produced between 1983 and 1985...were not the kinds of reforms that helped thoughtful, creative, effective people in the schools."

struggling to do the best job they possibly can. Frankly some of the reforms that were produced between 1983 and 1985, when I was interviewed, were not the kinds of reforms that helped thoughtful, creative, effective people in the schools. So I asked and was told that the governors wanted to know what their particular role was in education reform. The report is available, but more importantly, the governors made it clear that if they were going to invest a year and a significant amount of their States' money in the production of the report, they wanted to do something with it. I'm pleased to tell you that more than half of the governors, including your own, have said that they are going to be making legislative proposals this year that rely, at least in part, on recommendations from this report.

There were seven task forces. One looked at the quality of higher education. The second looked at what could be done to improve the readiness of young people, particularly young people from low income families, for schools through high quality early child education and remedial programs. A third task force looked at parent involvement and choice among public schools. A fourth task force looked at how we could attract and retain outstanding teachers. A fifth looked at how we could attract and retain outstanding school administrators. We felt a lot of attention was being given to teaching but more attention needed to be given to school leadership. A sixth task force looked at technology. Not just computers but educational technology. The seventh task force looked at school buildings and facilities.

Graduation Rates

I said earlier that I disagreed with the notion that we have a rising tide of mediocrity. I think, by any objective standard, the nation's schools are doing a number of things better today than they have ever done before. Specifically, in the late 40's and early 50's and earlier, less than half of the youngsters who attended our public schools graduated. Less than half! Today 75% graduate nationally. That isn't to say there aren't some differences among some portions of the country. In Minnesota, where I live, 90% of the kids graduate and yet we have a 50% drop out rate among American Indians. So we have some real severe problems despite the fact that Minnesota leads the nation in overall high school graduation rates.

We've taken on more responsibilities in this country than any other country for our public schools. That is to say our public schools have much wider responsibilities. We are often compared to Japanese schools. I visited Japan and speak Japanese. There are some fascinating things about Japan, but my children go to the public schools in St. Paul, Minnesota and I would not want my children to attend the public schools in Japan. I don't know if others of you have visited Japan — it's a very different culture, very different ethic, very different expectations. A major problem in Japan is youth suicide. I think we can learn some things from the Japanese but I do not think we should adopt everything that Japan is doing. Having said all of that, we have made progress. Having said that we have higher expectations and broader expectations. I think we have real reasons to be concerned.

[1] Time For Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education, August 1986, National Governor's Association, Hall of the States, 444 North Capitol St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, 0-91 ($12.95).

Cooperation with Education Groups

The Governors' Report was not what some people feared it would be. It was not a teacher bashing report. They worked very closely with the teacher organizations. There has been considerable friction between some of the Governors and some of the education organizations and we did not in any sense attempt to minimize conflict and minimize disagreement. We attempted to work closely. We had terrific cooperation from the national and state affiliates of a number of the organizations, including the National Education Association, secondary school principals, the elementary school principals, superintendents association, the school boards association, American Federation of Teachers, and a number of groups in higher education.

We've had marvelous assistance in putting the report together. And we concluded, as a well know social philosopher, Moms Mabley put it, "There really weren't any good old days." You will recall what Moms had to say about the good old days. "Good old days! I was there! Where were they?" The fact of the matter is, there weren't any good old days in American education. We are making progress, but there is significant progress that must still be made. The governors felt that we had to move to a new and higher level of education all across the country for several reasons.

Economic Challenge

First, is that we face economic challenge unlike any that we have ever faced in the nation. This is an incredible debtor nation. In this marvelous wealthy country, we are the largest debtor nation in the world. One of the intriguing experiences over the last year or so, has been to talk with the governors in Florida, Alabama, Texas, and Arkansas — governors who a few years ago were sending their regional economic development corporations up to Michigan to steal your business, and to Minnesota, where I live, to steal our business. An interesting thing that's happening to Florida, Texas and Arkansas governors, is they are finding economic development corporations stealing their industry to Mexico, Central America, South America, and Korea. Koreans will happily work for $2.75 a day. There are places in Mexico, right across the border, which I visited with the governor of Texas not too long ago, where people work happily for $4.00 a week. Because the standard of living is such that they are coming off of farms where they made fifty cents a week and were doing terribly, and some rich gringo is going to open a plant near the border in northern Mexico and pay them the unheard of salary of $4.00 a week. You can imagine how the people in Texas and Arizona and Florida feel about that. What's happening is that governors are coming to understand that the highly paid low skill jobs are leaving this country, probably forever. It is possible to build plants, manufacturing plants, in other parts of the world, and pay people $4.00 a week or $2.00 a day and they will work happily for that. This is no news to people in Michigan. You have seen what's happened to some of your industries.

"We are going to have to...increase the skill levels of our people so that virtually all of our people will have the kind of education and the kind of skills that previously have been reserved for only a few."

We are going to have to do some changing. We are going to have to do more of the kind of thing we started out to do a few years ago, which was to increase the skill levels of our people so that virtually all of our people will have the kind of education and the kind of skills that previously have been reserved for only a few. Governors are coming to understand that money spent on education, if spent well, is an investment. It's a strategic investment. Recently I worked with Senator Gary Hart, presidential candidate. Senator Hart is talking about how education money is an investment. He's talking about strategic investment in education. And we must come to understand that, as the governors are. It's not to say that money spent in any way will help, but there are some ways we can spend money on education that will have a dramatic pay back. I want to talk a little bit about those.

Students Skills Found Lacking

I don't think it's necessary to spend a lot of time talking about the woeful statistics on national achievement. I said that there was no great time in the past when everyone was super competent. But frankly, as a person whose children attend public schools, whose wife is a public school teacher, whose entire career has been in public schools, our skill levels in this country are woeful. Recently the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that among 17 year olds, only 20%

could write a clear, short, persuasive essay. Eighty percent of 17 year olds cannot write a clear short persuasive essay. The National Assessment of Educational Progress also found that among young adults who had graduated from high school, only about 20% were able to figure a tip of 15% on a restaurant bill. Those of us who have been waiters and waitresses perhaps have new insight into the kind of tips that we got. It wasn't necessarily based on our service. When only 20% of the 20-30 year olds who graduated from high school could figure 15% tip on a bill, then we know there are some significant problems. Recently the colleges and universities did a study of skill levels of young people entering college and found 30% of young people entering college in this country had at or below a 7th grade reading level. I'm not talking about dropouts. So we have some skill problems.

Restructuring Schools

One of the things we can continue to do is to try and argue for more money for the same kind of institution. We can continue to do that. My frank assessment is that most of the governors will not participate. And many of the legislators will not agree to do that. There is a coming realization that if we are to have much more effective schools we must have a restructured school system.

During the last couple of years I was a school administrator, I recall one day — and I'm sure that this never happens in your school district — but one day I got to work at 7 A.M. and was doing some things before everyone else got there. The phone rang and the secretary said that the secretary from the central office, who was calling from home, had been told late in the evening to give us a call first thing in the morning because there was a report due in the central office. You never got information about reports due, and I pointed out to the secretary that I had never heard of this report I had to get to the central office by 10 o'clock that morning. I know this never happens to any school district in this room. But in our school district it happened fairly regularly. It was a source of considerable irritation to people in the building. In any case, I asked the secretary to look to see if she had a copy of the report. As it turned out, not only had the report not been sent to us, we were not even supposed to fill it out, but it took about 45 minutes on the phone for the secretary and about 15 minutes for me to find this out.

In the meantime, as I was working on this, the secretary buzzed back and said, "Excuse me, the president of the PTA is here. She had an appointment with some of the teachers but they haven't come in yet and she would like to talk to you." So I was about ready to see the president of the PTA when I heard a little commotion out in the office. One of our very best teachers had walked into the main office with a youngster by the shirt collar. He saw me and screamed, "It's your damn fault that this kid was screwing up. I told you two weeks ago to expel the kid." I was about ready to handle this situation when the secretary said, "Excuse me, Joe. I know you have a couple things, but one of the supervisors in the breakfast program called because there is a food fight in progress and they want to know if you could come down to help out." At that point a teacher walked up and said, "I hate to bother you, but I have a family emergency. Would you sign this form so I can get out of school today." It was now about 7:45 and of course we couldn't get a substitute. She wanted to get out of school for what turned out to be a very legitimate reason — she did have a family emergency. But we needed to figure out how to cover her classes.

Key Points from Governors' Report

I know those kinds of things never happen in your schools. But anybody who talks about how to improve the public schools has got to understand the reality of public schools today. The reality of public schools today is that public schools are being asked to do an enormous amount. And we simply cannot say that schools are terrible, horrible, and filled with people who don't have a commitment. I'm pleased that the Governors' Report does not say these things. This report does say some basic things.

First of all, it says we have to make strategic investments in education. We have to put more money into education in very specific kinds of things. If we do not put more money into specific things, we are wasting our money.

"We have to truly treat educators as professionals or stop criticizing the schools."

Secondly, we have to treat teachers and principals as professionals. That means they have to have much more power. We talk about real estate professionals, we talk about attorneys as professionals, we talk about doctors

as professionals. We have to give more power to people at the local school site to make the decisions they think make sense. We have to truly treat educators as professionals or stop criticizing the schools. We give extraordinary latitude to doctors, to attorneys, to real estate people. Not totally unregulated, but extraordinary opportunity for each of those professionals to create individual or group practices. Then after we empower the professionals to be involved in the training and the licensing of the people who are going to enter their profession, we allow clients to select among the professionals.

The third central part of this report is that there ought to be more choices among public schools. This is one of the elements that is in the Metropolitan Affairs report[2] and I want to spend a couple of minutes on that. This is not a theoretical idea among governors. Many of you have worked with governors and you know they are very suspicious. They have the attitude that recently was expressed in Missouri, "Show me where it is working. How do we know?" Governors are not willing to put their names and faces in any kind of report until they have pretty clear evidence something is working. And there are lots of governors' faces in the report — all 50.

Spanish Harlem: Choice Makes a Difference

What are some examples of public choice programs that are appropriate for this group to talk about? One of the most interesting is occurring right now in Spanish Harlem. Some people think that choice is only something that happens in a few districts. Unfortunately, there are far too few districts in the country that offer families and educators the opportunity to create different kinds of schools. Detroit is one. It has some nationally regarded programs, and I hope in your deliberations and discussions you consider these. I know the MAC report did cite some of the programs in Detroit.

As I mentioned, one of the most interesting public choice programs is happening in New York City, District 4, which is Spanish Harlem. Some people say that poor people cannot make decisions, low income people can't make decisions, blacks can't make decisions — I have heard that a lot. Spanish Harlem has about 95% of its people on federal assistance. It is one of the most economically depressed areas in the country. About 10 years ago Spanish Harlem decided to eliminate neighborhood junior high schools. They decided to empower teachers; ask the teachers and the custodians and the principals to create the kind of schools that made sense, and then to let families select among them. Now in Spanish Harlem a lot of the kids would love to live in single parent homes. It's not a dual income home or even a single parent home for a lot of kids in Harlem. The junior high school kids sometimes live with an aunt, uncle, older brother or sister. So what the school district did was to have a decision making course in the 6th grade to help the 6th graders learn to talk with their parents guardians to decide what was the appropriate school for them to go to the following year. They have had this public choice program for almost a decade. When it started Spanish Harlem junior high schools ranked 32nd on the list of 32 school districts in the city. In other words, last. Today, Spanish Harlem ranks 16th. There has been a dramatic record of increased achievement of students and a drop in the rate of absenteeism.

"They have had this public choice program for almost a decade...There has been a dramatic record of increased achievement of students and a drop in the rate of absenteeism."

Where do the teachers in New York City now want to teach? Spanish Harlem is deluged with applications from people in other parts of the city, even affluent areas, who want to teach in the Spanish Harlem junior high schools because those teachers are empowered and are being treated as professionals. Those teachers are asked every year to think about ideas and whether students succeed and not worry about daily lesson plans. Programs are so good the kids are moving in from the Bronx, Queens and other parts of Manhattan, despite the fact the school boards aren't very happy about it. But the kids are voting with their feet.

You might consider saying to the teachers and parents in a particular district, "What about the possibility of having all of the public schools at the elementary and middle school level be schools of choice?" This would of course be after we have empowered parents, and after we have used some of the money that I said had to be strategically invested, so that the teachers have an opportunity to work with parents to create distinctive kinds of schools.

[2] Dialogue for Change: Options for Re-Structuring K-12 Education (1988)

If you look at Spanish Harlem you can see that teachers have had the opportunity to create distinctive kinds of schools. Empowerment of parents to choose among schools doesn't make any sense if you haven't given teachers the opportunity to create distinctive schools. Empowerment of teachers doesn't make any sense if you haven't given parents the opportunity to select among schools. Teachers will create distinctive kinds of schools.

Why Teachers Leave

That leads me to two stories as to why I left education, at least as a teacher and administrator. When I was a young and naive teacher in the early 70's, we had a text book committee in social studies. I taught Social Studies 12, which in Minnesota was "Contemporary Issues." We were told in the fall of 1972 that we were expected to select Social Studies 12 text books for the next 5 years. We proposed that we be allowed to spend the money over the next 5 years. The older teachers in the group said we were wrong, that it was not a good idea and we were going to be sorry. But we persisted and convinced the school district to let us do this. This was a radical decision to empower teachers to do something that made sense and saved the district money. The first year was fine, we spent 30% of the money. The second year was fine, we spent 20% of the money. The third year the district had a budget crisis and we lost the rest of the money.

A few years later, on a larger scale, somewhat the same kind of thing happened. I became a school administrator. Teachers were not satisfied with the English Social Studies curriculum in our junior senior high school and wanted to create a different kind of program which allowed them to create different courses. The teachers developed four English courses which included reading, writing and speaking. I met with parents and they were most interested in the following: one was a conventional English course, using Warriner's handbook. One was a course on debate where the kids would do research on current topics and compete with other schools. The third course was a Great Books course. The fourth course was a course where the kids studied current problems in the community and produced slide films. Kids loved it. Test scores went up. Teachers loved it. They felt empowered.

The school board members decided, without consulting with the school administration, that they were going to eliminate this program. One morning we read in the paper that the school board decided on a 7-0 vote to eliminate the elective program in our school. We had a staff meeting and agreed to try to talk to the school board. They said it was an administrative decision. End of discussion. We cried and I quit about a year later. I couldn't ask teachers, in all good conscience, to voluntarily commit their time to plan extraordinary programs and ask parents to try new ideas and just have it bashed in their faces.

I tell you these two stories, not just because I want you to feel sorry for me, but because this kind of thing is the "norm." I'm not saying it happens in every district, but John Goodlad did a survey of 1,000 classrooms all over the country as part of his research for, *A Place Called School* (1984). He talked about how in every place he went, teachers had lots of good ideas they were not being allowed to carry out, most of which did not cost more money. He concluded, and I quote, "The cards are stacked against deviation and innovation." One of the things we must do is to empower teachers. Treat them as professionals or stop criticizing schools. We will not have significantly better schools or higher achievement if we continue to treat teachers as factory workers.

"We will not have significantly better schools or higher achievement if we continue to treat teachers as factory workers."

Cambridge, Massachusetts: Choice Closes Gap in Scores

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, five years ago the district decided to change the way they offered elementary and middle school education. Teachers were empowered. All of the schools became choice schools. There were no more neighborhood K-8 schools. Recently I visited Cambridge and talked to teachers and parents and they are ecstatic. Over the last five years a number of things have happened. First of all, the students' test scores have all increased significantly. Cambridge is not just a university town. It is a very racially and economically diverse town. The gap in scores between white, black and Hispanic students has decreased. So all of the students have improved. This is very important. Some students have now left parochial schools to attend

the public schools because they are so good. One of the measures is whether kids can read, write and compute.

Drop-Outs

The most recent survey about dropouts indicates that about one-quarter of the kids who drop out are very bright but bored. That's not necessarily a criticism of the teachers and the administrators. We've put too many

"The most recent survey about dropouts indicates that about one-quarter of the kids who drop out are very bright but bored."

restrictions on the schools and haven't given the people in the schools at the elementary and secondary levels the kind of academic freedom of people in the colleges and universities.

The central point is this. We have a crisis in this country. We can deny it — and if we deny it — we are in grave danger of having what happened in England happen to us. A couple of hundred years ago, England was a world power. Today, it is no longer. The standard of living there was about the highest in the world — it is no longer.

SECTION B
Perspectives on Choice and Excellence in Education
SEMCOG Workshop

I want to try to be as specific as possible about some things that I hope you here in Michigan will consider, based on some things happening around the country. There is no question that there have been lots of reports written about education. The 1983 President's Commission on Excellence in Education — probably the most famous commission report the nation has ever known — called *The Nation at Risk*, said in terms that were reported throughout the nation and in fact throughout the world, that the United States President was saying that his nation was at risk; that there were all kinds of problems in the nation's schools. What we were doing to ourselves was of the magnitude and consequence of a foreign power waging war upon us.

The President's Commission also stated that there was a rising tide of mediocrity. I explained to other groups that I disagreed. I think we have severe and significant problems in American education, some of which I will be specific about in a moment, but I don't think the research shows that things are considerably worse today than they were 20 years ago.

Incentives for Change

The Governors' Association and governors in general are interested in education for four reasons.

First, they understand clearly that education in most states is the single or one of the largest budget items. I understand that in this state it is not the single largest budget item of the state treasury, but it is one of the largest. That is a very important factor for governors as they recognize they are under increasing pressure to do more, as the federal government has decided to do less. And as the federal government struggles to do other than buy bonds and guns and missiles and so on, regardless of how one feels about what's happening in Washington, it's clear that we have an enormous deficit and there is not going to be a significant increase in education funding or funding for lots of other things that states do over the next couple of years. So governors are having to look carefully at their state budgets and for many of them the largest single item is education. Thus, they have to look carefully at how that money is being spent, whether there aren't ways to make more effective use of the money they are spending, as well as the need to spend more money on education. There is interest in many places on spending more money on education.

The second reason governors are interested in education is because they recognize the world has changed. The governors are looking very carefully at what they can do to attract industry. Some of the states, such as Louisiana, are being told flat out by the industrialists that they are not going to move into Louisiana and some other Southern states because the people are so poorly educated. The illiteracy rates are so high that businesses simply cannot find enough people with strong skills to work in their offices and factories. Thus, the second reason the governors are looking at education is because they are recognizing that it's tied to economic development.

"The illiteracy rates are so high that businesses simply cannot find enough people with strong skills to work in their offices and factories."

The third reason the governors are interested in education is that they are coming to understand that there is almost a direct relationship between the percentage of dropouts in a state and the percentage of people locked up in a state. Governor Perpich in Minnesota is the Chair of the National Governors' Association Task Force on School Dropouts this year. He points out that this correlation exists. The states that have a high number of dropouts have high numbers of people who are incarcerated. People in states that have low numbers of students dropping out have low numbers of people incarcerated. In fact, Minnesota, which leads the nation in small numbers of dropouts has so few people in its prisons that it is literally making money for the state by selling space in its prisons to other states, like yours. Minnesota is literally making money because it doesn't need all of its prisons. On the other hand, a quarter of the states in the country are under Court Order to build new prisons.

What the governors are coming to understand is that they either spend the money now on K-12 and preschool education or they spend it later. In Minnesota it costs about $4,320 a year to fund a child in secondary school. Stillwater State Prison costs $23,000 a year for one person. It's a simple economic decision — do you want to

spend it now or later? If you don't spend money on high quality education — and not all of what we have to do in education requires money, I'm going to talk specifically about that — but if we don't spend money on high quality early child programs, if we don't spend money on other kinds of restructuring programs, we'll spend it later on more jails, on bigger prisons, on more attorneys, on more judges, and so on. We'll also spend more on unemployment. We'll also spend it on food stamps and other kinds of things. So we have some economic decisions to make.

There are things we can do to eliminate dropouts. Some of the central things are to empower teachers and provide more choices among schools, so kids learn in ways that make sense and teachers have the opportunity to teach in ways that make sense to them. High quality early childhood education is an absolutely critical investment.

Finally, in a little less pragmatic, little more idealistic vein, we are a nation which has been a light unto the world. We are a nation which has said, "People we will help you achieve your potential." In the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and the Constitution we talk about the potential of people. Twenty years ago you did not need a high school diploma to do well in the world. You did not need to have strong basic and applied skills. What is clear to governors, is that if we are to make it economically and if we are to make it in society, we are going to have to have a much better education for all of the people, not just a few. All of the people are going to have to have much higher schooling. Otherwise we are doomed. As states and as a nation we are doomed and there is increasing understanding of this in governors' offices, an increasing understanding of this among some educators, which brings us to your report and to the report of the Governor's Association.

When I was an educator, and I still view myself to some extent as an educator of different audiences, not just young people, one of my favorite books was a book written by some teachers in a little town in Georgia that talked about how to improve the schools. It had three chapters. Chapter one was on what to do with no money. Chapter two was on what to do with some money. Chapter three what to do with enough money. I want to talk a little about each of those three areas and how it relates to the report by the Metropolitan Affairs Corporation, *Dialogue for Change*. As mentioned earlier, we had seven task forces. The task force on school facilities presented lots of information that I think would be useful to this group — as I understand it you are elected officials of local and intermediate school systems, community colleges, town boards and so on. The first thing we pointed out was that the infrastructure of schools is crumbling. We have a $40 billion gap. We have not put much money into schools, relatively speaking, over the last few years. We pointed out, as one of the governors himself wrote, "Nobody bargains collectively on behalf of school buildings."

Shared Facilities

Now what are some things that are happening around the country that are important to this group? I want to mention three things about school buildings.

The first thing that's happening is that a number of school districts and cities are finding that by putting their money together and developing shared facilities they can have outstanding programs that cost everybody less. In Boston, for example, and Minneapolis St. Paul, the city and the school districts have developed cooperative programs that build playgrounds together. They have built school buildings that are community centers. In Springfield, Massachusetts, there is a building that is cooperatively owned by the city and the school district. They have social service agencies right in the school building. By bringing together these two jurisdictions they are able to save the school district money and they are able to save the city money. They share the cost of heat and light and security. They have day care programs right in the school. The kids from the school help out. They learn about child development, not just out of textbooks, but by helping out in the day care center. The parents in the community have a readily accessible school day care program. The city doesn't have to pay rent and doesn't have to build a new building for its social service agencies. It doesn't have to pay the rent for its day care centers. It doesn't have to pay rent or to find space in a building for the social service people because they are right in the school.

"...a number of school districts and cities are finding that by putting their money together and developing shared facilities they can have outstanding programs that cost everybody less."

In a number of school districts around the country, a new program has started called Cities in Schools or Communities in Schools. This is a restructured way to provide social services and education. It puts the probation officer, case workers, and a number of agencies with offices right in the schools helping to pay the costs of heat and light and so on, but also working directly with the schools. It's a classic example of how working together saves everybody money and improves services.

The Governors' Association indicated that much more of this kind of thing has got to happen. The governors are very down, by and large, on the idea that in most states most schools are open less than half the year. It's crazy and we can't afford it anymore. The governors are saying clearly that we can reduce costs in lots of ways by reorganizing and one of the ways to reorganize is to think very carefully about year round schools. Year round schools are an idea that's been around in education for a while. The research that we identified shows that in growing school districts, a school district where enrollment is increasing, it makes a lot more sense and is less costly to have a year round program where kids go the same number of days but there are some youngsters always in school. It is less expensive to do that than it is to actually have a school only open 180 days and to build a new building.

"...when families have the opportunity to select among public schools...students do better in school, their attitude improves, their achievement improves, and their graduation rate improves."

Choice In Public Schools

And what about the choice issue. This has enormous implications nationally. Your Metropolitan Affairs Corporation talked about the whole issue of choice. The Governors' Association strongly endorsed more choice among the public schools. The Governors' Association looked closely at what happens when families have the opportunity to select among schools and said four things. First, when families have the opportunity to select among public schools, parents feel better about the schools. Second, students do better in school, their attitude improves, their achievement improves, and their graduation rate improves. Third, when teachers are given the opportunity to create different kinds of programs from which families can choose, teachers feel better about their work. Finally, high quality programs of choice among public schools result in more integration. There is more mixing of kids from different racial and economic background. Now we just didn't take this on theory. We were able to document to the governors satisfaction that these things that I have just said are true.

I just want to give four quick examples of this kind of thing. When people talk about choice among schools it has often been lumped in with more money to private and parochial schools and there are certainly some people who are in favor of that. But the Governors' Association, as you know, came out clearly for more choice among public schools. There has been a major shift in thinking over the last couple of years. Much more attention has been devoted to this idea of more choice among public schools.

There are some school districts in this state that do not provide choices among public schools. I found in conversations with a number of people, some of them are in this room, that some districts provide choices among schools and others do not. There are some districts that have decided that if you live in this area you go to this school, if you live in that area you go to that school. It doesn't make sense according to all of the research that we identified. It's not simply a matter of large cities having to do this for desegregation.

Public School Choice in Minnesota

The Minnesota Business Partnership issued a report a few years ago that there ought to be more choice among schools and recommended that 11th and 12th graders ought to be able to go to colleges and universities without school board permission. The Governor supported allowing families to move across district lines so long as their movement did not have a negative impact on desegregation. The central thing that happened was that only a portion of the bill passed the legislature. This portion lets 11th and 12th graders go to colleges and universities with the tax dollars following the kids. Students do not have to get school board or administrative permission. The school boards hated the idea, fought very hard against it. Last year was the first year of the experiment. In Minnesota, 4,000 kids

participated last year. This is about 4% of the high school seniors and 2% of the juniors.

Some people fear that in these kinds of programs it is only the "best and brightest" who participate. In fact, two-thirds of the kids who participated were not "A" students. Six percent of the kids were dropouts — that is to say that six percent of the kids who participated were kids who had literally left the schools because they didn't like it or they had personal problems, or whatever. The chance to go to a college, university, or vocational school brought a number of kids back into education who had dropped out because they couldn't handle the structure of high school. Their grades were higher than the average freshman class despite the fact that they were not the students doing the best in high school. They were not the brightest kids.

Two-thirds of the kids who participated had average grades of B, C or D. How can somebody who has a D average make it in the community college? We have examples of kids who have done that. I have an article from the *Christian Science Monitor* for those of you who are interested in this program. It has attracted a lot of attention. There are some kids for whom high school is great in some areas and not so good in other areas. One youngster, for example, who had between a B and C average took a political science course. The young man was very interested in politics. He took this course at the University of Minnesota and got a B — almost an A. He didn't quite get the last part of the exam so he got a B+. Some youngsters who do very well most of the time in high school will want to take a course or two at the community college.

The satisfaction rate was at the top of the charts. Ninety-five percent of the kids were satisfied. Ninety percent said they studied more for community college courses. Not only was the program good for the kids who left, but it was good for the kids who stayed and for the teachers in the schools. High schools all of a sudden didn't have a captive audience.

Another interesting thing has happened. I haven't talked about this to previous groups. I have a real problem with programs that let youngsters go to high schools for half a day and sling hamburgers at McDonalds or Burger King for half a day. I really don't think its a very good educational experience for kids. Lots of kids want to get out of school for a variety of reasons. They want to earn money. This program has had a very interesting impact on those kids. Recently there was an assessment of this whole program. But particularly in one district those youngsters who had gotten out of school for half a day to go sell hamburgers and make lots of money for fast food franchises and a little for themselves — the report found that those youngsters had stopped working during the school day. They were going to academic high schools half a day, then to vocational schools, and then at night they were working. Incidently their grades improved. They had a longer day. They had more academic courses and they had a specific vocational course that was preparing them for some real high quality jobs as compared to just learning how to make hamburgers. The kids were asked why they were doing it? What was going on? They said, "We recognize that working at fast food franchises doesn't really prepare us for the working world, but we couldn't stand being in the high school longer than three hours a day. We recognize that we are going to need more skills if we want to get good jobs in Minnesota, so we are going to take these vocational courses which are terrific and are preparing us to be legal secretaries, carpenters, computer technicians and so on. And then we work in the evening to earn spending money. We would much rather do this than what we did last year."

"Their grades were higher than the average freshman class despite the fact that they were not the students doing the best in high school."

Now the program came under enormous attack from some of the education groups last year, which tried to kill it. But a coalition of people — including the Minnesota PTA, the Minnesota League of Women Voters, the Minnesota Business Partnership and the students who participated in the first year — went door-to-door at the state legislature and kept the program alive. This year the program is alive and a number of other states are thinking about it. I would encourage you to think about it here in this state.

One other interesting thing has happened in Minnesota, and that is the competition for these students has produced increased cooperation among the high schools and colleges. That is to say, a number of high schools and school boards have now turned to community colleges and said, "Can we set up

cooperative programs?" Community colleges were a little nervous about this. They don't want to fight with the people who supply the kids who come to their schools. One community college did a lot of advertising this first year and found that they weren't invited to come to the high schools on college night. They were nervous about this. A number of colleges and high schools have set up new cooperative programs as a direct result of this. The high schools were happy, the community colleges were happy and the kids were happy. In other words we are talking about a win win kind of proposition.

Last year the St. Paul public schools established a program at the University of Minnesota allowing students to take courses in a high school for which both high school and college credit was offered. The program was so successful last year that this year five of the high schools in St. Paul are doing the same thing with no additional appropriations. There was an agreement between the school district and the college to do what made sense. There was stimulation and encouragement to do this.

Choice in Other States

Since 1977, Florida has allowed 11th and 12th graders to go to community colleges. Last year, 6,000 went to these colleges and earned higher average marks than students at the community colleges.

Arizona has somewhat the same program for 11th and 12th graders. In Arizona families have also had the opportunity to move across district lines without school board permission as long as it does not have a negative impact on desegregation.

There are lots of ways to think about choice programs. One way is the way Detroit has done. Detroit has some terrific programs that are available to the schools, the parents and the teachers on a basis of choice. Some of the school districts represented in this room have offered different kinds of distinctive programs within the schools. That's one way to think about it.

"In Arizona families have also had the opportunity to move across district lines without school board permission as long as it does not have a negative impact on desegregation."

Another way to think about it is to have an entire section of a district in which all of the programs at a certain grade level — like Cambridge's — are choice. No neighborhood schools. Cambridge has eliminated neighborhood schools.

Another way to think about choice is to involve higher education institutions, or post-secondary institutions as some of us call them, so there is movement back and forth. Another way is the way Governor Perpich proposed to let families move across district lines so long as the move did not have a negative impact on desegregation.

I recognize that the last idea has lots of implications in this area. You have had some very difficult struggles over busing and integration and I'm not saying what is appropriate for your area. That is something that you will have to decide. But there is no question, based on all kinds of experiences around the country, that expanding choice among public schools can have a positive impact and can help produce what the Governors say has to happen, which is significantly higher levels of achievement.

Student Achievement

I just want to very briefly talk about the levels of achievement. Our report is not a teacher bashing, it's not a school bashing report in the sense that we say that teachers are awful, school board members are awful, principals are awful, woe is us! We don't say that. We say

"Recently, 9th and 12th graders in this country were compared with 14 other nations, European and Asian. Our kids ranked 13th out of 14th."

that there are a lot of dedicated, caring people in the schools and there are lots of school board members who care. But the way that we organize the system is not designed for the highest productivity. We must reorganize the system if we are to achieve the potential of students and educators.

Recently in the Twin Cities suburbs — which love to pride themselves on how much they are beyond the national averages — first and third graders were compared with first and third graders in Japan. I am not fond of Japanese education. Nevertheless, we can learn some things from the Japanese. One thing we can learn

is about parental attitude and achievement. In comparison with our first and third graders, the kids in Japan and Taiwan were far above the Twin Cities suburbs in math scores. If we are to succeed in the world our youngsters must have much better math knowledge. Recently, 9th and 12th graders in this country were compared with 14 other nations, European and Asian. Our kids ranked 13th out of 14th. We can't have it. We have to do a lot better. There are ways to do better. We can make better use of existing resources. We can specifically put resources into such things as high quality early childhood education programs, into choice programs which create distinctive opportunities and empower teachers.

The central point is this. We can deny that we have problems. Most education groups and most business people have stopped denying that we have problems. We can continue to do more of the same. The best thinking in the country right now is that more of the same will not produce the kind of educated citizens we need. It will not produce the kind of society that we must have.

SECTION C:
Questions & Comments

Luncheon Presentation

Q: Do we have enough people to put these new ideas together after we cut through the structures of the system? Do you think there is enough emphasis put on the necessity of leadership?

A: There has been a lot of reference in recent years to the importance of the school principal as the leader. She or he is critical to an effective school. The research we identified pointed out that there is a lot of frustration many teachers feel toward the school administrators. One of the things we did that caused a lot of discussion was raise some very severe questions about the qualifications of people going into school administration, and whether the training of people going into school administration was in line with the job. A number of governors have taken it up and are trying to make legislative initiatives.

There are a number of administrators who want to do good things. One of the questions that was asked in Cambridge, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and in Spanish Harlem, where these kind of choice programs were established, was, "Are there people who are capable of providing the leadership?" The answer was an absolute, "Yes." Were they all school principals? No. A couple of days ago, within the last week, MacNeil Lehrer on Public TV had about a 15-minute program about Spanish Harlem. What they found in Spanish Harlem, and in a number of other places, was that most of the time the leadership for the creation of these distinctive programs came from building principals — but not always. Sometimes it was groups of teachers who said, "We have an idea and we would like to get together and work with an administrator." But the ideas and the energy really come from the teachers. Are there enough educators, teachers, and administrators to carry out the kinds of programs? I think the answer is, yes, but I think there really has to be the opportunity, and given some of the experiences, I think the results will be extraordinary. But they must truly have the opportunity.

Q: What has been the response of school boards to the Governors' Report?

A: We had very good cooperation with the National School Board Association. The NSBA said we would have to do some very hard thinking about their role. Recently, the Institute for Educational Leadership produced a report indicating we have to rethink the role of the School Board Association and school boards. What are their responsibilities? We have an adversary relationship between teachers and administrators. We have an adversary relationship between teachers and school boards. The Governors' Association recommends a certain responsibility for administrators, teachers and for school boards. There are school boards who are doing the kinds of things we talked about, but some are not.

The Governors' Association points out that the idea of complete local autonomy and local control is not a reality. We do not say to school boards, "If you want to provide education for handicapped students, you can, and if you don't want to, you don't have to." It's a federal law. We don't say to school boards, "If you want to have equal opportunities for males and females and for whites and blacks that's ok, and if not, that's ok too." There are some limits of control and we suggested that there be some further limits of control. For example, that school boards not be allowed to decide whether students could or could not go to neighboring school districts so long as the movement didn't have a negative impact on desegregation.

School boards are going to have to do some rethinking. If they don't like these ideas, they are going to have to come forth with a plan in conjunction with other stake holders as to how we are going to achieve a higher level. We cannot exist as a nation, as an economic entity, as a progressive society if so many people come out of school with inadequate preparation. It's not simply a matter of economics. It's a matter of a progressive social system. We have said to people, "We will help you in this country to achieve your potential." Twenty-five years ago you didn't need a high school diploma. Today you need to have strong skills. That's a long answer, but a fundamental question. School boards have to rethink their roles and carry out some of the reforms we have suggested. I hope that the NEA and AFT and some other groups use the things we've recommended.

One of the most eloquent comments made by a classroom teacher testifying in front of the governors was, "We tend to have an inaccurate picture of

power. We tend to think that power is a pie and a bigger slice for somebody means a smaller slice for somebody else. But it's not like that. Some believe that if families are allowed to choose among schools, that means that educators have less power. That's not true. When families have the power to choose among schools, then educators have more power, because they are allowed to create distinctive programs rather than being told, this is the way you're all going to do it."

If school boards work out cooperative programs with educators, there's going to be less confrontation between the educators and the school board. We can point to systems around the country where the kind of approach we describe and recommend has worked, and it has reduced conflict and confrontation and increased achievement. Everybody is happy.

Q: What do you see as far as those who teach the teachers in the schools of education and universities?

A: That's a real problem. Recently in Minnesota we had a 20 member group of people who came up with 55 skills and aptitudes that all prospective teachers ought to gain before they become certified as teachers. And all of the research shows that one of the central characteristics of an effective school is one that works closely with parents. If you want to increase student achievement, one the most important, quickest and least expensive things to do is to develop specific programs of cooperation between the teachers and the parents. This distinguished group of 20 people came up with a list of 55 attitudes and skills that all prospective teachers ought to have and not anywhere on that list was a simple statement as to what teachers ought to learn relative to working cooperatively with parents. Not one statement about parents in this list.

You have several nationally respected people in your teacher education institutions, including Judith Lanier from Michigan State, coordinator of the Holmes Group. They have recently come forward with some recommendations about change. The Governors' Association did not endorse those recommendations entirely. We think there ought to be more empowerment, as I was saying earlier, of the people in the schools who are outstanding teachers who do the training.

California recently adopted legislation that I hope Michigan will consider. Teachers of teachers have to, every 4 or 5 years, go back into the classroom — not to do a workshop on in-service day, and not to do research — they have to teach. Kappan Magazine, last fall, had a marvelous article from a professor of education who said she hadn't been in a classroom for 12 years and went to observe and said it was a real revelation. So I hope you will consider in this state some legislation like that and consider some experiments where outstanding teachers have the opportunity to do teaching in micro units.

I talked about some school districts around the country, including New York City, where colleges and universities have hired outstanding teachers to be adjunct faculty members during the summer. Some of the high school education institutions have hired outstanding teachers to teach courses in teaching. Some of the finest minds in the country about how to use computers are people who are in classrooms. But we have to rethink the way we are training teachers and the way we are training administrators.

Q: School Boards spend much of their time trying to pass millages. How do you have time to do anything else?

A: There is this curious paradox that is described in the musical Fantasticks about some things that don't make sense and that no one can explain. I don't know how many people have seen the musical. But it talks about the paradoxes of life. This may strike people as naive, but I can point to school districts which have decided to spend less time overtly talking about passing millages and more time creating programs that make sense — like Cambridge and other places. They find that by creating programs that are responsive to teachers and parents, the public support increases dramatically. Some school board members have said, "We have to spend so much time fighting with our teachers that we don't have any time to do anything you are talking about." Some school board members have found that by establishing an empowerment program for teachers and parents, and concentrating on that, it increased public support and became much easier to pass the millage. That's somewhat naive, but somewhat true.

Q: When we've gone out with our report (*Dialogue for Change*) and talked about choice and the open enrollment choice, one of the points that has come up often, is what happens to the bad schools. So you have choice — so what. Perhaps you might tell us more about what happened to those schools in Spanish Harlem. What's the other side?

A: I think that schools can differ without being better or worse. In Minneapolis, for example, there is a Montessori school, an open school and a continuous progressive school. All of them are good places for some teachers and some kids. So schools can differ without being better or worse. However, it is also true that some are more effective than others, just the way teachers and some principals and parents are more effective than others. In a number of the kinds of choice schools I've described, if schools consistently do not attract students, one of three things happens.

A new principal is moved in and they revise the curriculum, in cooperation with teachers, as they did in Cambridge. Three years ago one school was consistently attracting the fewest students and had the lowest test scores. The district thought about closing the school, but decided not to close it. Instead, they brought in a new principal and put money into staff and program development. This year that school ranked first in the city in the standardized tests and has lots of teachers who want to work there. When a school is not attracting people, it needs to revise what is happening in the school.

The second thing you can do is ignore it, and fewer and fewer people go there, and it degenerates. Unfortunately, there are some places where that happens. The third thing that can happen — and it happened in Spanish Harlem — is that the school closes. People will say there are not enough students to justify the school's continuing to exist, so staff people are reassigned. In some cases, there are few consequences for ineffective performance, particularly, I might say, at the administrative level. Teachers feel there is a lot of comment about what to do about weak teachers. There are also weak administrators. We seem to have a lot more consequences for weak teachers than weak administrators.

One of the clearest lessons of education reform relies on a coalition of people both inside and outside of education. The best reforms happen when people are pushing from the outside and the inside. Teachers and administrators are frustrated when they try to make reforms and the communities are indifferent or hostile. People on the outside of education are frustrated when they push through reforms, and the people who are teachers administrators inside the school system, feel like they are being imposed on, and resist. The kind of thing you are doing here, and in other instances, is clearly the way the best education reform will happen. It has to be through coalitions. There are going to be people inside and outside oppose it. But if progress is going to be made it will be on the basis of this kind of coalition.

Workshop Presentation

Q. Were you referring earlier to the Coleman Report?

A. Jim Coleman has issued a number of reports. When I said, *The Nation at Risk*, that certainly is one of them. It was issued by the President's Commission on excellence and education — that's not called the Coleman Report.

Q: How do you institute year-round programs?

A: I'll tell you how a number of school districts have convinced residents that year-round schools make sense. They show them the dollars and cents of the arguments. The National Association on Year-Round Education has dollars and cents figures from school districts throughout the western part of the United States. This is primarily a California and Colorado phenomenon, although the number of year-round schools has increased dramatically in the last couple of years. This Association has reports that show how school districts will save money. If the school districts are growing, they will save money by having the schools open year-round, instead of building new buildings. People are looking at dollars these days, and year-round education will save money as well as — according to all kinds of reports — increase achievement. If we started in 1987, we would not set up schools with a three month vacation.

It makes no sense. We know from all of the research that having a three month vacation results in a lot of students forgetting a significant amount. The first month of school is often spent, particularly in the elementary grades, in reviewing what students did in spring. Three months is too long to keep students away from formal learning. From an academic point of view, in certain districts, it's a disadvantage.

Q: How would you absorb expenditures of 11th and 12th grades in the community college and vice versa? What is the structure? Does it go through legislation?

A: I understand that in this state it requires an agreement between the community college, the state board and the school district. In Florida there is a similar situation. Money is provided by the legislature, which double funds it. In Florida 6,000 kids did this last year and the school district doesn't lose any money, and the community college gets money. The school district must agree to do it and most school districts in Florida have agreed to do it.

In Minnesota, it doesn't work like that. It is not double-funded. Dollars follow the kids. The parents and the students make the decision, not the school boards. There were already some school districts that were allowing this to happen, but many were not. There is also — and I think it is critical — transportation for low income students in Minnesota, so this is a true expansion of choice for families of low income.

Q: What happens when the dollars behind each student are different in each district? For example, one district has $3,400 and another district has $6,000 per year. How do you determine the right amount of payment to the college?

A: Basically it works like this. The colleges and universities are not required to accept anybody. If they have extra space they can accept a student. The community colleges choose to accept everybody that comes. They are not allowed to charge additional money if they have extra space. High school students are allowed to register after the community college students register. Though the colleges cannot charge the students any money at all, they can count the students. They get some reimbursement from the state under the regular state aid formula and they get some money from the school district. The money they get from the school districts vary. For example, in one district that is spending $2,500 a year for students, if the student spends half of her or his time at the community college, than $1,250 follows the student. If the school district is spending $4,000, and the student spends half of her or his time, its $2,000, if that is the actual charge at the community college. The community colleges may charge no more to the school district than the regular registration for courses. In most cases the community college tuition is less than the cost to the school district to educate a student.

Q: What kind of a partnership is there in Minnesota between local support and state support for education. In Michigan, for example, it was 50/50 at one time. In the early 80's it fell dramatically to the point where the local area was providing three-quarters or seven-eighths of the support and the state was only providing the balance.

A: It varies from school district to school district. There is a formula. The state pays approximately 65% and the local district pays for about 35% — on average.

Q: In the state of Michigan we are talking about local tax money leaving a school district and going to a community college.

A: That's absolutely true, and I assure you that the school boards in Minnesota have said that they don't like local tax dollars following the students. But the question is, "Who is the money for? Is the money for the local district or for the education of the child?" The Minnesota legislature has decided that locally generated money is money for the education of the child. And the child, more specifically, the family, decides where that education should most appropriately take place. Certainly many school board members, but not all, don't like the idea that the money leaves the district.

Q: Can a student accomplish the kind of transition you are talking about? I have a concern about students who can't handle that, but whose parents push them because it's now a status symbol to get out of high school, and, in fact, push the rites of passage further down. What experience have you had with that kind of activity?

A: I'd love to bring you to Minnesota to talk with the kids who are participating. I think the concern you raise is very important. We don't have enough rites of passage. In most cultures there is some kind of demonstration of skill before you get confirmation of duties — before you are allowed to graduate, marry and take on additional responsibilities. Many religions still have some kind of rites of passage. I've suggested in some of my writing that we need that desperately. I also described a process in a school in which students had to demonstrate academic and personal skills. They had to show they could be useful to other people. They had to show how they could get a job and some other things. So I agree with you that we need a rites of passage. I'm a very strong believer in that as one kind of graduation requirement.

How does that apply to this program? One of the interesting things that happened is that some youngsters who have dropped out of high school, or who are in-school dropouts — they come to school everyday and don't do very well — say one of the reasons they don't like high school is because they are treated like children. They are participating in this program because they are treated like adults in community colleges.

It is a strange and intriguing thing to talk to high school students who at 18 are managers of a fast food franchise and are literally responsible for an $800,000 payroll, and go back to a high school where they have to get a pass to go to the bathroom. The way we treat students at age 18 in many — not all — of our high schools, makes zero sense in terms of increased maturity. That is not to say that all high school kids are capable of doing this.

There was fear on the part of some people that huge numbers of kids would participate and view this as a status symbol. There haven't been huge numbers. The first year four percent participated. There was not a dramatic increase in the number of kids who were participating in the second year. Those of us who support this idea think this is fine. We didn't want to take huge numbers of kids out of regular school programs. We wanted to provide additional options. I think it makes a lot of sense to have different options and different kinds of programs in high schools.

I've worked for a number of years for more internship kinds of programs. It seems to me that by the time a youngster is 17 or 18 he or she ought to be spending a lot of time out of the school building. For example, being an intern with a doctor, attorney, state legislator, business person, city council member, or school board member. Schools in which I worked did that. We need more rites of passage. We need to help youngsters — in that great phrase of Jim Coleman's — "have a better transition between youth and adulthood." We are doing a very poor job of that. But most of the kids who are participating in this program are not participating because it is a status symbol, but because they see it as a better opportunity.

Q: Not far from here we have a school that operates four days a week for fifty weeks and that is their school year. Would you want to comment on that?

A: There are a number of models of year-round schools. One of the things I think you get into with year-round school calendars is that some parents love it and some parents hate it. What a number of districts have found, is that they ought to offer different kinds of calendars and let parents decide what calendar they want. This is why it is tied to the whole idea of empowerment of educators. If you let educators create distinctive programs, parents can choose among them. Some parents say, "Four days a week — that's crazy — what do I do with my kids the fifth day!" For some parents one of the primary functions of school is custodial. On the other hand, some school districts offer programs that parents can choose where a lot of resources are put into latch key programs before school and at the end of the day. That's offered as a choice kind of program. Some parents want to know why you are spending the resources like that. I want my kids to learn a language at the elementary level. I think some wise school districts are doing that. Frankly, I think its a good model for some teachers and some students. Certainly we know that some youngsters and teachers will do better if they have a longer day or longer year.

Q: We know that there is a problem between the attitudes of the courts and educators regarding the status offenders — truants. Did the governors address that issue?

A: No.

Q: Any reason why?

A: The governors decided to look at seven of the issues they thought were most difficult for them. They decided which task forces. If you want to make a recommendation to the governors about an issue that you think ought to be dealt with, I would encourage you to do so. In fact, that's where some of these task forces originated. The Governors' Association does have a task force this year on school dropouts that is looking at that issue to some extent.

I want to say one last thing about all of this. There have been a number of models on education and social reform over the last five years. We've seen some states which have imposed reform from the state capital that haven't worked very well. We've seen some states where educators have tried to impose reforms on school districts and that has worked, while in others it has not worked. I've suggested a number of fairly dramatic changes in ways that we organize and control schools. They may not be appropriate for your individual situation. Some of them may be. But it's clear, the most effective reforms are going to come about through a coalition of business people, political officials and people who work daily with the schools, either as school board members, teachers or administrators. The best, most lasting, kinds of reforms are those kinds of reforms. In Minnesota, although it has been very controversial, the reforms I have described have been supported by a coalition that included business groups, parent groups, some educators and some administrators. They were opposed by a number of education groups. But they are moving ahead because of these coalitions.

I think it is terrific that Metropolitan Affairs Corporation is trying to stimulate this kind of dialogue. I'm not saying that any of the specific things that I talked about are appropriate for you here. If you look at the priorities of certain education groups, you will not see number 1, 2 or 3 being high quality early childhood education. I must tell you, in all honesty, that if I were a political official in virtually any state in the union, the next dollars that I had to spend on improving education would go into high quality early childhood education programs. If that's going to happen, its going to happen because of coalitions of people who say we must make it happen. The budgetary process and state legislature, as we all know, is not necessarily rational.

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